The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Russell at the Walworth County Government Center, 100 W. Walworth St., Elkhorn, Wisconsin.

Roll call was conducted and the following Supervisors were present: Tim Brellenthin, Vice-Chair Jerry A. Grant, Kathy Ingersoll, Daniel G. Kilkenny, Kenneth H. Monroe, William Norem, Susan M. Pruessing, Rick Stacey, Charlene Staples, David A. Weber, and Chair Nancy Russell. A quorum was established.

Approval of the Agenda
On motion by Supervisor Stacey, second by Supervisor Norem, the agenda was approved by voice vote.

Motion to Convene as “Committee of the Whole”
Supervisor Ingersoll made a motion, second by Supervisor Weber, for the Board to convene as a “Committee of the Whole.” No “No” votes were heard.

Public Comment
Chair Russell called for public comment.

Ellen M. Holly, W5108 Wandawega Drive, Elkhorn, WI – Spoke regarding the importance of promoting mental health services in Walworth County and requested the Board to consider the cost of staffing, training, availability and access to services offered by the Health and Human Services Department when making their final decisions on the budget and consider increases for these services.

Jon Hochkammer, 198 Acker Court, Verona, WI, Outreach Manager for the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) – Spoke regarding the attributes and benefits of WCA membership. He asked the Board to reconsider the value of the WCA and to reinstate the membership dues that were removed from the Walworth County 2020 budget.

Mary Burpee, 609 W. Walworth Street, Elkhorn, WI – Expressed concern for the increase in drug use and other crimes often associated with the lack of good mental health and requested the Board to review further the funds budgeted to the Health and Human Services Department.

Chair Russell called for further public comments or questions. There were none.

Finance Committee Chair to Conduct Public Budget Hearing
Chair Russell turned the meeting over to County Administrator David Bretl, who gave a brief overview of the Public Budget Hearing procedures.

Bretl expressed appreciation to all Department Heads, County Board Supervisors, and Administrators for their work on the 2020 Budget. He introduced and thanked Finance Director Jessica Conley, Comptroller Todd Paprocki, and Finance Manager-Budget Stacie Johnson and turned the meeting over to Conley.
Presentation of the Executive Summary

Ms. Conley gave an overview of the 2020 Preliminary Budget. She said Walworth County proposes a tax levy increase of 1.39% following a 2.77% decrease last year, and several years of low and relatively no increases in prior years. She noted the theme of this year’s budget relates to the “Impact of Change.” The 2020 budget brings new challenges as the County begins to prepare and adjust to several changes. An overview of the budget process was provided.

Conley provided a comparison of the County’s tax levied for the 2020 budget to the levy of the 2011 budget year. She said the total tax levy is $1.1 million or 1.8% less in that 10 year time difference. She stated Walworth County continues to operate under a strict levy limit. The allowable growth limited to increases in net new construction has increased the operating levy by $5.1 million over the ten-year period, which is an 11% increase or about a 1.1% average increase per year. The library system has increased about $374,000 over the ten-year period. She explained that decreases in the County’s Children with Disabilities Education Board (CDEB) levy and the debt service levy have allowed for the levy to be less than 10 years ago. Conley said debt service expenses were completely eliminated at the end of 2018 and noted that Walworth County may be the only Wisconsin county with no debt service outstanding.

Conley stated the 2020 Lakeland School/CDEB budget remains stable with a $72,000 increase in the levy. She said the major capital project for Lakeland School in 2020 includes the remodeling of classrooms to better meet student demographics and skill levels. The remodel will include a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) Sensory lab at a cost of $375,000, funded by building reserves.

Conley gave an overview of the equalized value and net new construction changes. Walworth County’s equalized value with Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) Districts is over $15.7 billion. This is a new record high for the first time since 2009, which was at $15.6 billion. This means that Walworth County has finally recovered from its property value loss, which first occurred with the recession in 2008.

The County’s total tax levy may only increase by the growth of net new construction, due to the State’s levy limits. Conley said the net new construction is 1.59% for 2019, which is utilized for the 2020 budget allowed levy growth calculation.

Conley stated the average total County mill rate in 2019 was $4.02 compared to the projected $3.87 in 2020, a decrease of about 15 cents per thousand of equalized value or a 3.8% average mill rate decrease.

Conley said the County portion of the tax bill is approximately 22% of the total tax bill, and depending on the municipality in which you reside, this portion can be as low as 5% or as high as 35%.

Conley noted operational costs continue to rise and stated while the State cap does allow room for growth in new construction, it does not allow for any increase in inflation. She said Walworth County must continue to make tough choices year after year to maintain a near zero levy increase. Options include raising fees, identifying new cost savings measures, or determining services we can no longer offer. The lack of ability to adjust for inflation is the area of greatest concern requiring the County and many other local government districts to make more and more difficult decisions.
Conley provided an overview of the Building and Equipment Reserves in order to maintain and preserve the County’s infrastructure. She noted the Sheriff’s Radio Communications project has been postponed until 2021. She reviewed the 2020 Security and Space Needs Assessment for the entire County building campus; the 2020 Capital Building Projects; the Five Year Plan - Road/Bridge Capital Planning; Interdepartmental and Intergovernmental Cooperation initiatives; and provided an overview of the departmental operational, building, and equipment related changes planned for 2020.

Conley stated wages and benefits make up just over half of the County’s budget and summarized the Preliminary Operational Expenditures. Wages and benefits have risen by 3.8%, or $3 million in total from last year.

Conley said in a time where unemployment rates continue to remain incredibly low, the County Board has taken the position that the cost of good employees and less turnover is important to the services that are provided and also key to the success of our County.

Conley provided an overview of a policy change relating to a limit to the Administrator’s budget of 1.5% of a department’s expenditure budget that may be included in unspecified payroll savings. Lakeland Health Care Center, Health and Human Services and the Sheriff’s Office were among the departments with general payroll savings totaling over $600,000. She said the new policy states that any planned shortfall must be addressed during the year prior to utilizing excess revenues or available savings for other discretionary purposes.

Conley gave a brief overview of the County-wide Full Time Equivalents (FTE) and stated the 2020 budget includes 860.77 FTEs, a difference of 18.45 FTEs from the 2019 adopted budget.

Conley provided an overview of the health care costs and reported an overall increase of $600,000 from the 2019 budget due to both new positions and changes in rates. She stated this year the health insurance premium increase for employees is in the form of a 2% increase for Tier 1 and a 4% increase for Tier 2.

Conley briefly explained how sales tax growth, with a 2020 budget increase of $900,000, along with federal and state aid will help to offset growing expenditures.

Conley then gave a brief overview of the tax allocation/expenditures by department, the 2020 operational efficiencies that were incorporated, and an overview of requests that are not included in the 2020 budget.

Conley stated County Administrator David Bretl has announced his intention to retire the first quarter of 2020. Bretl has been with the County since 2001 providing guidance, leadership, and stability to the County. The County celebrates its list of many accomplishments including being the only County to be debt-free, as well as having a fully funded Other Post Employment Benefits Trust fund for eligible retiring employees’ health care benefits.

As a result of Bretl’s retirement, Corporation Counsel will formally separate from the office of Administration and will assume greater responsibilities in reviewing contracts as well as assume responsibility for risk management. This will create the need to add a full time Deputy Corporation Counsel, and decreasing contracted legal services. Additional changes include the transfer of a ½ of an administrative assistant from Administration, and the addition of a half time legal assistant position. It is anticipated that Michael Cotter will be appointed as both the Land Use and Resource Director and Corporation Counsel. Mr. Bretl has pledged to work with the County Board to assist the County in the transition to a new Administrator.

Conley stated the 2020 Preliminary Budget increases the total tax levy 1.39% from last year, with a spending plan of $151.3 million in expenditures.
Conley concluded the presentation by stating the 2020 Walworth County Preliminary Budget is available for review in the County Clerk and Finance offices and the County’s website (www.co.walworth.wi.us).

Public Comments and Questions

Bruce Vander Veen, W8866 Cemetery Road, Town of Sharon, Sharon Fire & Rescue Fire Chief, past President of the Walworth County Chief’s Association in the MABAS Division, Committee Member of the Walworth County Fire/EMS Committee, Chair of the Walworth County Emergency Communications Advisory Council – Spoke briefly regarding the difficulties facing emergency services and requested the Board to reconsider the inclusion of an independent study of a consolidated emergency service dispatch and to assess the impact of change.

John Peters, City of Lake Geneva Fire Chief – Spoke relative to the consolidated dispatch study and asked the Board to consider hiring a subject matter expert to review the study and to make a fact based decision. Peters thanked the Board for the emergency services items that have been included in the budget.

Chair Russell called for further public comments or questions. There were none.

Motion to Close Public Hearing

On motion by Supervisor Monroe, second by Supervisor Weber, the Public Budget Hearing was closed.

Chairperson’s Report

Chair Russell announced that all titles for the November 12, 2019 County Board meeting are due on Wednesday, October 30, 2019.

Adjournment

On motion by Supervisor Monroe, second by Supervisor Weber, the meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

STATE OF WISCONSIN )
COUNTY OF WALWORTH )

I, Kimberly S. Bushey, County Clerk in and for the County aforesaid do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the proceedings of the County Board of Supervisors for the October 29, 2019 Public Budget Hearing.